compounds the challenge. Based on independent monitoring undertaken by reputed institutions on some of the major rivers under NRCP, the water quality in terms of BOD (Bio-chemical Oxygen Demand) values has improved at most locations as compared to water quality before taking up of pollution abatement schemes.

Conservation of rivers is an ongoing and collective effort of the Central and State Governments. The Central Government supplements the efforts of the State Governments in river conservation through the central plans. River conservation activities such as creation of civic infrastructure for sewage management and disposal are also being implemented under other central schemes, such as Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns, as well as under State schemes.

The Government has initiated an exercise for revamping the river conservation strategy to promote a holistic and integrated river basin approach. The Central Government has set up the 'National Ganga River Basin Authority' (NGRBA) on 20.2.2009 as an empowered planning, financing, monitoring and coordinating authority to ensure effective abatement of pollution and conservation of the river Ganga by adopting a holistic approach with the river basin as the unit of planning.

Conservation of ponds in Madhya Pradesh

†1878. SHRI RAGHUNANDAN SHARMA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any proposal, worth Rs. 256 crore for development and conservation of 10 ponds, has been received from Government of Madhya Pradesh; and

(b) if so, the action taken in this regard, so far and by when the proposed sanctioned amount will be released?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A proposal entitled 'Conservation and Management of Lakes in Bhopal' at total cost of Rs.256 crores was received from the Government of Madhya Pradesh for financial assistance from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The proposal has been included in the reprioritized list of projects of Ministry of Environment and Forests for JICA assistance and forwarded to the Ministry of Finance for posing to Government of Japan under ODA Loan Package during FY 2009.

Forest cover

†1879. SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:
SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that for pollution free environment 33 per cent forest cover out of total geographic area is essential;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.